

# **The Dilemma of Maps, Texts and Identities: Conceptualizing the Body in Contemporary Feminist Arab Art**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The present paper aims to investigate the aesthetical concepts of representing the body in contemporary Arab Art from the individual perspectives of three female artists, who are from Palestine, Morocco, and Egypt. On such aesthetical exploration, the three artists convey their personal reflections and connect them with the image of the body, which overlaps with other visual elements in their artworks. Furthermore, this study aims to critique the stereotypical perception of the body in the Arab media and visual culture. Regarding the methodological framework, in this visual critique the conceptual and aesthetical framework constructed a qualitative analysis that recreates the connections between the images of the body in the artworks with the personal reflections of the artists who made those artworks. This aesthetical/critical methodology negotiates the symbolic and iconographic value of the body. This qualitative methodology is suitable for creative studies, where the subjective content is clearly manifested than the objective content, which is a significant phenomenon in Fine Art Studies. This paper finds that the images of the body that appear in the women-made Arab Art are not limited to sexist contents and symbolism. However, the image of the body in Arab Contemporary Arts conveys social, political and spiritual values from hyper individual/personal perceptions. The present popular Arab visual culture is not limited also to the representations in the electronic and commercial media, which connect the image of the body with commercial or mere political intentions. The Arab Arts reflected the Arab cultural identities, memories as well as social iconographies from diverse perspectives. This study is

practical and purposeful for Fine Arts professors who employ studio practices as well as practice-led research methodologies in teaching art, researching art as well as making art. It is significant to use the artwork as a paradigm to discover the temporalities and symbolisms of the body representations in the visual culture. In this framework, the author focused on the aesthetical manifestations of the body iconographies in contemporary Arab Arts. Furthermore, this research is significant because the author critiques and analyzed the pictorial as well as the conceptual values of the visual artworks and connects them with local and global conceptual frameworks based on visual aesthetics.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Arab Art, Visual Culture, Multimedia, Feminist Criticism, Qualitative Methodology, Social Reality.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

This investigation focused on the aesthetics of body representations performed by three Arab female artists in their visual artworks. The subjects and objects, which represent women and their belonging iconographies in visual art, create feminine aesthetics based on contemporary art practices (Millner, Moore and Cole, 2015). In this study, the visual interpretation concentrates on analyzing the aesthetics of the human body to expose the levels of metaphorical connections, narratives, and memories. The conceptualities of the artworks reproduced the iconography of the body as subject and object. Thus, those artworks conveyed the connotations of individual identities through spontaneous handwriting of letters, and splashes of incidental colors, masses, and spaces merging from the traces of the artist identity into contrasting the relationship between femininity and masculinity in visually confrontational artworks. In the artworks, the visual level contains multiple instances of female symbols, besides the metaphorical level, which displayed the aesthetic experiences of the female identity.

The present exploration aims to bring the readers' comprehension up to the thematic advances in contemporary visual arts, while artists connected their identities into a deconstructive exchange with viewers on trans-aesthetic philosophies. The three artists examined in this paper Mona Hatoum, Lalla Essaydi and Amal Kenawy represented multilayered images of the human (feminine) body and critiqued its sexual objectification across different circles of media, geographies, and communities. In such a deconstructive context, the perception of the feminine image connects with the sensual representation of the female body. Considering that, contemporary visual artists expressed cultural representations of the imagined body aesthetics and produced visible and metaphorical feminine or feminist reflections. They used feminine/feminist memories and patterns in pictorial compositions to portray women's identities that emerge from the artworks with colors, lines, and movements, while the symbolic subjects of the artworks symbolized different narratives transporting from media and popular cultures.

The purpose of this paper is significant because it investigates the evoking images of the women's body through private and public spaces that re-create the relationship between the individual, community and bodily identity. The author reflects on three visual artworks as a connection point for being a female artist with an Arab heritage who is examining the aesthetics of the body in unconventional manners. The characteristic components of the artworks are iconographically significant because they represent latent and manifest meanings of social issues through the image of the female body.

Methodologically, this study designed a conceptual framework to conceive the metaphor of body aesthetics in contemporary Arab art. The generator of this investigation is the qualitative analysis that connects this conceptual framework to the contemporary visual culture to define the heterogeneity of body perception. The visual culture is the cause of the symbolic meanings, or the sources of meanings developed from the cultural subjects portrayed in contemporary artworks. The qualitative analysis explains the symbolic characteristics of the visual artworks (D'Alleva, 2006) as it defines the metaphorical connections or representative significance. The qualitative analysis explains the dynamics of the artistic experience through inherited and aesthetic influences, driving the research to visualize the connection between the artwork and its social environment.

In contemporary art research, methodologies are key mechanisms that progress into the subjectivity of creativity and the objectivity of knowledge. Researchers build qualitative methodologies to examine the diversities of the artworks, observers and creators (Mitchell, 2002; Preziosi, 2009; Purgar, 2017; Savin-Badin and Wimpenny, 2014). The qualitative analysis marks the practical components in the artwork as the unit of analysis (Rose, 2001; Leeuwena and Jewitt, 2001). In this context, qualitative research has a significant criticality where the outcome of each critique will reflect the prevailing practices of individual artists in representing the aesthetics of the body in their artworks. Furthermore, the key limitation of the present study is the unit of analysis, which is the artwork itself. The author selected three artworks that represent women's images, with different body representations. The aesthetical manifestations appear in those artworks through the concept of covering and uncovering the female body from artistic perspectives. The three artworks represent symbols, photographs, handwritings, sounds, objects, and fashions.

## 2. THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

This research focused on three Arab female artists who practice visual arts on regional and international scales. Those artists are from Palestine, Morocco, and Egypt. Recognizing the necessity and the significance of practice-based and practice-led research on visual arts in the Arab countries, the approach of this visual research is beneficial for the advancement of art research in the Arab region and the Middle East.

**Table (1).** This table presents the details of the three artworks produced by Mona Hatoum, Lalla Essaydi and Amal Kenawy that are being investigated through this study.

Artist's Name	The Country	The Artwork details (Title, medium and date)
Mona Haltom	She is a Palestinian, who works and lives in United Kingdom.	<i>Measures of Distance, Video, 15 minutes (1988).</i>
Lalla Essaydi	She is Moroccan, who works and lives in France.	<i>Harem Women Writing (2008), Chromogenic print mounted to aluminum (50.8 x 61 cm).</i>
Amal Kenawy	She passed away in 2012, Egyptian who worked and lived in Egypt.	<i>Body Trapped Heaven, video and photography, (2006).</i>

### **3. THE CONCEPT OF THE BODY AND FEMININE IDENTITY:**

Through investigating the deconstructions of politics and feminine body, the manifestations of the human body appeared today as a critical subject in different global art venues. Into which, artists and art curators practice the critique of the classic relation between the iconographies of the body and socio-politics. The feminist aesthetics resemble subjects and objects through analyzing cognitive circles of the artists, audience, and society (Millner, Moore and Cole, 2015). The author, throughout this paper, focuses on the artistic patterns signified into the artistic practices of Mona Hatoum, Lalla Essaydi and Amal Kenawy. In their artworks, cultural subjects pictured gender representations, individual and common spaces, displacement, and nostalgia as well as depictions of domestic spaces and cultural identities.

The three female artists represented complex cultural identities and expressed with significant individuality their creative beliefs. They were negotiating gender politics through provocative body iconographies, which broke down from the colonial histories and stripped their current visual culture. In the visual contexts/compositions of their artworks, the visual elements such as handwriting, language texts, and female bodies engage deeply with individual narratives and memories that transfer through the spheres of personal to collective experiences. The manifestations of such engagement befall under the exposure of the present electronic social reality while creating direct impacts on daily artistic practices. This is a phenomenological characteristic of the current global culture, where the wonders of contemporary social art reflect the extensive differences of the individual experience in the 21st century.

Social reality issues come to fill the gap between the practice and research in the field of visual art since all the artists are personal tools for their visual queries. Curators on the other side elevated the significance of social realities in the contemporary art scene, where they believed that this endeavor has some potential to create a new era in the history of art. The concept of the feminine or feminist identity is one of the significant social reality issues that can highlight the impact of global and local policies and cultures on contemporary art when artists represent the current political and cultural situations from the communities where they live or move to start a new life.

As highly creative individuals, Mona Hatoum, Lalla Essaydi and Amal Kenawy are contemporary artists who lived across different urban and social spaces. They carried their social memories through displacement, exile, and the diaspora representing/visualizing individual identities of Palestinian, Egyptian and Moroccan women. Those three female artists share a common Arab heritage along with common Arab visual culture, and, to some extent, they also share common language orientations. They moved through European, Arab and Middle Eastern societies, geographies and politics to convey their artistic practices. The three Arab artists investigated trans-cultural identities that interpreted the politics of gender and feminism with the iconographies of women bodies through colonial and post-colonial narratives. Separately and on everyone's own individual endeavor, every single artist represents the iconographies of the human bodies in their miscellaneous artworks, they practiced photography, painting and drawing as well as the arts of calligraphy, utilizing body painting with henna and different body paints, textiles, and fashions.

The three artists are significant examples of global contemporary artists who represented the feminine identity in the context of the North African and Middle Eastern societies. They used the feminine figures/bodies in the visual compositions to convey socio-political critiques reflecting memories through photography, painting, drawing, and writing (Behiery, 2018). Such arts

manifested North African identities next to Arab and Middle Eastern identities, which identified layers of Palestinian, Egyptian and Moroccan social realities with diaspora, displacement, and nostalgia across the Other's geographies and communities.

#### 4. MONA HALTOUM, MEASURES OF DISTANCE (1988):



**Figure (1).** Mona Haltom (1988), *Measures of Distance* (detail), Video, 15 minutes.

The fragile temporality emerges through this video artwork while the viewer imagines and experiences the visual, as well as the emotional impacts, being evoked within the images of the Arabic handwriting and the silhouette of the human body. This artwork consists of a video accompanied by an Arabic soundtrack, which is translated into another overlapping English soundtrack. The shape of the receding human body overlaps with parallel lines of handwriting while strong shadows are coming from an open window in the background that sets the viewer in a very visually shocking situation. In this artwork, Mona Hatoum extends her provocative art beyond the cultural and political spheres (Galerie Chantal Crousel, 2016). The viewer is vulnerable to the shocking visual dose coming from the mixed Arabic handwriting with an ambiguous naked body, which presents an unfamiliar image for the Arabic audience or the global audience in general.

Through investigating the iconographies of the woman body and the ambiguous text, this artwork evokes an overlapping Arabic language soundtrack with its English language translation. This soundtrack records a conversation between two ladies (mother and daughter) discussing gender roles from a feminine perspective (Darat al Funun, The Khalid Shoman Foundation, 2008). The symbolic interpretation of this video artwork manifests through consequent images of a bathing woman, who is the artist's mother. Those images overlap with a handwritten letter by the same bathing woman, which was sent to her daughter Mona. This video represented a conversation discussing the subject of sexuality between a mother and her daughter, while the images of the bathing mother and her letter to her daughter are overlaying.

Mona Hatoum's art parallels Edward Said's literature. She is the visual equivalent of Edward Said, who delivered an automatic article on her practice, describing the paradoxes of her arts. Those paradoxes according to Said (2000) lay within the multiple layers of the artworks' symbols and iconographies, which existed in the unfamiliar displacements of the domestic objects and moods into the unexpected art contexts. The title of Said's text was *The Art of Displacement: Mona Hatoum's Logic of Irreconcilables*, which negotiated the varieties of her aesthetics in representing the Palestinian exodus into contemporary art. Her art is not a stereotypical reflection of the Palestinian issue, thus full of significant creative efforts that convey a social and cultural image of the real Palestinian Diaspora. She reflected the trans-modernities combined with the domestic feeling of being into unfamiliar contexts and thus translating her spiritual temporalities into an unfamiliar visual dialogue.

As a displaced artist with a feminist point of view, she witnessed with her Palestinian parents a deeply difficult experience of emigration and exile. In 1975, she could not return from London to Lebanon because of the breaking civil war. She was born in Lebanon in the year 1952, the place where her Palestinian parents refuged to after the Israeli armed aggression on the Palestinian people in 1948. In London, she practiced visual arts and represented the aesthetics of the personal space with the iconographies of her body, language, and Arabic texts:

All this is designed to recall and disturb at the same time. Whatever else this room may be, it is certainly not meant to be lived in, although it seems deliberately, and perhaps even perversely, to insist that it once was intended for that purpose: a home, or a place where one might have felt in place, at ease and at rest, surrounded by the ordinary objects which together constitute the feeling, if not the actual state, of being at home. Next door, we find a huge grid of metal bunks, multiplied so grotesquely as to banish even the idea of rest, much less actual sleep. In another room, the notion of storage is blocked by dozens of what look like empty lockers sealed into themselves by wire mesh, yet garishly illuminated by naked bulbs (Said, 2000, p. 108).

The study of Mona Hatoum art identified the phenomenon of displacement through regional and political layers. It located subjects into a Trans-Arab, or on wider scales, a trans-Middle Eastern visual culture. This contemporary art practice offered the visual researchers and critics a comprehensive background to negotiate the diversities of the Middle Eastern visual arts from trans-aesthetic perspectives. In Mona Hatoum's art, the intention is to negotiate the symbolism of domestic iconographies within the political narratives.

Such domestically-oriented narratives are unconventional on trans-aesthetic scales when presented through multicultural contexts. Nevertheless, such varieties convey multilayered connections between global and local contexts. According to Said (2000), the artist Mona Hatoum created a high level of irreconcilability to recognize the inconsistencies in representing domestic, political and social subjects when manifested into transitive and multicultural spaces, by assembling a process of rethinking this unfamiliar visual synergy between the foreign and domestic intervals across her visual irreconcilables (Darat al Funun - The Khalid Shoman Foundation, 2009). These subjects expressed in Mona Hatoum's visual images are part of the people's reality that they faced every day in their displaced daily life.

Her experience in art, as well as life, emerged into a trans-national exposure through compulsory displacements within a turbulent environment full of political uncertainties (Said, 2000). Hatoum's art translated the history of the contemporary exodus into visual diaries that demonstrated the narratives of Palestinian people while they transformed across their paradoxical trans-realities. She represented their exodus in her art from domestic perspectives. Mona authorized the Palestinian exodus by creating a significant relationship between herself and social identities, and consequently, she delivered this paradox to the international art scene through regional and international art venues.

##### 5. LALLA ESSAYDI, HAREM WOMEN WRITING (2008):



**Figure (2).** Lalla Essaydi, *Harem Women Writing* (2008), Chromogenic print mounted to aluminum (50.8 x 61 cm).

The visual artist who created this artwork is Lalla Essaydi, into which she explored the nostalgic poses of the odalisque using unconventional media. The content, as well as the composition of this artwork, critiques the colonialist heritage associated with the feminine image through a creative contemporary art investigation. This is why she approached the personas of the global art audience to be avant-garde in the international community. The North African and Middle Eastern artist belongs to a diverse culture, through the coexisting groups of different religions and beliefs, and through the interaction between the Mediterranean culture, Red sea culture, and West Asian culture.

The visual representations of gender in art indicate social dimensions and bring into consideration many elements to interpret and analyze the artwork that represents women surrounded by handwriting with henna on their clothes and on the background that appears in the artwork. In this context, the Moroccan female artist Lalla Essaydi reveals the relations between being a woman, being an artist, and being a North African. In the international art presentations, curators select themes to represent gender concepts approaching the social concerns of everyday people. In case they focus on feminism, they bring feminine issues as well as diverse subjects that would give more space to represent women and their belongings.

The dilemma of feminine identity in contemporary visual arts constructed a significant argument out of two levels; the first is the common perception of the women's image, the second one is the real meaning of this image. This corresponds to the concept of perception, which is the way of understanding visuals, and interpreting them into certain codes of knowledge. The feminine identity is a trans-aesthetic subject that rendered different levels of culture, politics, and geographies. When investigating the woman's identity as a focal point we encounter layers of meanings and interpretations exposed by the artist. In this trans-aesthetical context, Heidegger expressed this turbulent creative situation by connecting the objective physical entity with spiritual subjective impressions. His expression "the age of the world picture" is a real story brought into consideration of what Heidegger called "dis-position". A term that was "compatible with an ethical view of the individual as itself represented in and as his or her works and deeds as if an individual could be separated into 'material and immaterial' portions (bodies and souls)" (Preziosi.2009, p.403).

Lalla Essaydi represented social issues throughout using latent and manifest symbolisms that reflect collective and individual statements. The visual compositions of the artworks investigate the values of the trans-modern democracy, multiculturalism as well as feminist-oriented sociopolitical subjects. These women who are writing with henna, in the artwork, highlight the differences and similarities through the feminine portraits to drive the analysis from diverse perspectives. Furthermore, those artworks root from collective Middle Eastern culture, which established collective symbolisms and inspired social and political temporalities to critique "to some extent" the unreal utopian identity imposed on the female subject. Lalla Essaydi, as an artist, composed forms and symbols to express latent and manifest meanings, where the social reality made direct impacts on the constructions of those meanings. She expressed general similarities as well as many differences in the technical and symbolic levels. Symbols and mediums were used to express the social issues impacts on contemporary arts.

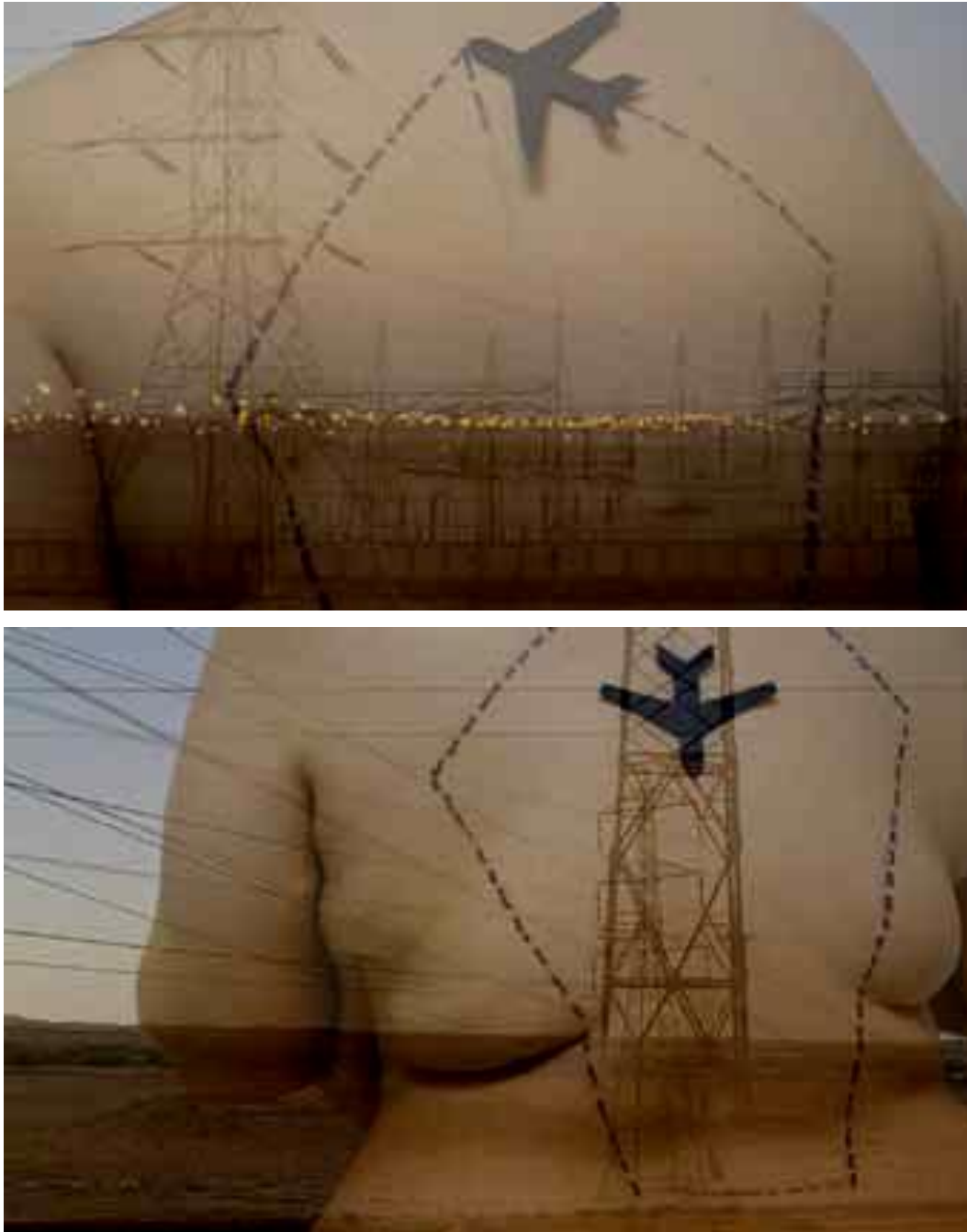
Feminine issues and feminine aesthetics come into view in the contemporary artistic practice of North Africa and the Middle East. This practice increased in the latest years to express social concepts, while artists are facing challenges on different aspects to express social themes like



gender and cultural identity. Women were an object and subject of artistic experience since the first efforts of creativity in the human intellectual history (Kleiner, 2011) suggesting the spirit of the community at different times to give the artist the reason to go against conventional norms of his age and change the common visual culture of his community. Artists are confronting social impacts that have a major role in the social contexts, taking inspiration from social dynamics over different levels of politics and gender. The social context is a rich area for contemporary visual arts as long as it represents contemporary identity.

The contemporary social reality hybridized the diaspora, gender issues, political conflicts, and cultural identity subjects into the global culture. All those social issues became components of the hyper culture of our contemporary time. Giddens (2014) suggests that the dynamics of democracy, social communication, and free markets changed our traditional values. The prior dynamics caused many examples of diaspora, conflicts, gender, and cultural issues, as we witness today one of the massive immigrations, exiles, and conflicts in human history across the Mediterranean Sea. The cultural hybridization defiantly will take place in the global culture where the local values mix to create homogeneous platforms that give space for differences and similarities among young communities, which contain people from different cultures (Cohen, 2008). Contemporary Art curators tend to represent the phenomenon of social art because it resulted from the massive changes of the human experience in the 21st century. Diaspora, conflicts, and gender issues are taking a strong part in the hybridization of contemporary culture, which appeared in the artistic representations in international venues.

On the other hand, Giddens (2000) emphasized the role of mass communications in destroying the human private and public spaces by leaving no space for human dialogue, as long as huge multinational communication agencies play a significant role in reshaping the perceptions of the people around the world. In addition, Giddens (2000) investigated the impact of democratic waves on the United States, Europe, Africa, Eastern Europe, as well as countries from the Middle East. He analyzed the role of media in the democratic transformations by imposing new cultures and values on the local social reality. Nevertheless, many examples of those new democracies failed as the people or other parties have overthrown many local governments in the world. People created revolutions against western made capitalisms to promote local values and respect the national culture.

**6. AMAL KENAWY, BOOBY TRAPPED HEAVEN (2006)**

**Figure (3).** Amal Kenawy (2006) *Body Trapped Heaven* (detail), video art and photography.

Amal Kenawy (1974, 2012) from Egypt is a contemporary artist who represented her female identity in the context of the Middle Eastern society, displaying her artistic responses throughout photography, video, and installation art. This video artwork was displayed in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennale (2007) holding the title "*Body trapped Heaven* (2006)" where she used a nude female body in the video composition. Furthermore, this artwork participated in the African Pavilion at Venice Biennale manifesting two geopolitical narratives. The first one is that the artwork is contributing to the global scale outside the place of origin, and the second essential statement is that

Kenawy represents Egypt in the African Pavilion instead of the Egyptian pavilion. This indicates, from geographic and cultural perspectives, that Egypt as a country can participate in the African oriented events side by side with the Middle Eastern oriented events because Egypt is considered to be in the Middle East and the North African region. This highlights another fact about the Egyptian society that reveals its North African identity next to its Arab-Middle Eastern identity, which identifies the superimposed layer of the Egyptian social reality with its African, Arab and Middle Eastern affiliations.

*Body Trapped Heaven* (2006), as an interactive artwork, autonomously translated political and social issues and created a universal visual dialogue. This artwork signifies the human body as a crisis zone, fragile, unknown and exposed. Such an ambiguous sensuality draws the absolute human memory as a crisis zone. The aesthetics of the human body and the image of the flying airplane, as well as the image of the receding city in the background, all are overlapping in one image, evoke the belonging consciousness to recall the experience of displacement. This work is aesthetically threatening, as the present intimidating sense of ambiguous space is attaching the perspicuous memory of undeniable exile.

The concept of displacement in this video artwork represents the impression of foreignness and disorientation resembling a disturbing visual dialogue of belongingness and loss. This visual dialogue deconstructed the ordinary visual perception to reproduce ambiguity and stimulate the audience to wonder about the common situations that existed on a daily base. The significant visual impact in Amal Kenawy's art involved the audience and connected them to the complex emotional response that provoked the individual memory into layers of social, political and cultural anxieties.

This feeling of transnational displacement exposes the relation of the female artists with their diaspora, assembling a connection with the geographical reality and their trans-cultural survival. These artistic contributions into the narratives of the personal experience engaged the artists with other temporalities of the Egyptian collective memory. Such memory accounted for different cultures. This stimulates the artists' paradoxical accounts to critique the similarities and differences during the creation process of the artwork.

Amal Kenawy represents social reality's issues and represents subjects on women and identity in their dynamic relation with local and global communities using multimedia such as video, photography, and installations. As a female artist, she critiques common ideas about women's role and gender rules into political orientations. Along with different displacements as well as different social structures, this indicates particular similarities and differences in the visual artworks. This set of similarities and differences leaves the art critics as well as art historians in cutting edge situations that push them to understand the social reality on the political, social and economic spaces in countries like Egypt and to examine them as contextualized contexts. Amal Kenawy illustrates the systems that influence social realities in the Middle Eastern countries that conceptualize similarities and differences in the contemporary visual arts.

She discusses the subjects of cultural and spiritual dynamics that stereotype the identity of Egyptian women in the community. Her provocative art deconstructs the social imaginations that set the female body into social rules that people may not experience in other impressionable communities, which indicates that different social realities of the Middle East create different aspects in interpreting artworks. The Egyptian artist Amal Kenawy participated in international art events and interacted with many viewers in her short lifetime throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. She displayed several significant artworks across different places; exemplifying

her approach towards global art scene with a very significant manner (The Khalid Shoman Foundation, Darat al Funun, 2007). In the context of analyzing this artwork, *Body Trapped Heaven* is a dualized adventure, which is self-driven through the real bodily world. The protagonist is on board heading homeland; the cityscape fades away while the small plane is moving. Cities, streets, and people, all have no name. Amal created an individual visual language, as a universal communication way to express and explain artistic responses on a global scale. She represented her social reality from political, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions, as they portray narratives from the Egyptian community. The individual identities and the cultural memories take part in her artistic practice, to merge into the boundaries between reality and imagination.

## 7. CONCLUSION

From trans-aesthetic perspectives, the artists arrange their themes according to collective and individual memories. Local visual culture and people's ethnic identities created sustainable creativities, on which the future of arts will emerge. The three artists Mona Hatoum, Lalla Essaydi and Amal Kenawy invited their audience to perceive their artworks from socio-political perspectives, as a narrative material, paying more attention to the world issues that illustrated wider threats on humanity. As contemporary artists, they believed that each civilization is significant on its own (Joo, Keehn II & Ham-Roberts, 2011), where every society has a unique set of aesthetics. Within these assorted creative systems, different artists represent different sets of aesthetics. In the context of studying the impacts of the Palestinian, Moroccan and Egyptian cultures, the common knowledge indicates that each culture has a diverse assembly of creativities, which made art critics investigate the authentic artworks that reproduce the temporality of social status.

The three artists represented the narratives of local communities into global art to diversify the cultural capitalism in our trans-modern era. They offered new narratives to dislocate themselves outside the conventional media circle and expose themselves as well as people to unseen images. Those people became unconscious consumers of mass media productions that used death images, spirituality, and sensual contents to create fake realities and draw more viewers.

This paper presented the influence of the artist's impressions as well as self-identity on individual art. Furthermore, it illustrated the representational aesthetics of the displacement of the body as a characteristic feature in contemporary art where Mona Hatoum, Lalla Essaydi and Amal Kenawy exposed art to a multicultural audience. This conceptual approach in practice-led research would enhance the significance of the plural structure of cultural identities into one community. Artists' vision leads to new incites of cultural understanding, where concepts became diverse and individual in local and global levels, this would give more grounds to new experiences and new ideas about contemporary arts to the audience, through a constant dialogue between the international artists and the local viewers.

Social and political aesthetics assemble cultural systems drawing the dynamics of collective versus individual change into the aesthetical layers. Mona Hatoum, Lalla Essaydi and Amal Kenawy's visual artworks existed into displaced narratives of transnational societies representing aesthetical symbolisms of the Palestinian, Moroccan and Egyptian communities as trans-national, trans-aesthetic and trans-modern experience (Darat al Funun - The Khalid Shoman Foundation, 2006, 2008). These artistic practices are full of latent and manifest varieties of multiple diasporic issues according to different points of view. In other words, artists and critics may depict the same issues across different narratives and illustrate their development in visual art representations.

Through exploring the latent symbolism of the individual and collective memories, the aesthetics of the body in the visual arts are full of surrealistic and utopian fantasies that portrayed the turbulent reality of imagined identities, culture, and homeland. Mona Hatoum, Lalla Essaydi and Amal Kenawy's art are incomprehensible and ambiguous if we perceive from a single lens that focuses on the local political narratives. They deconstruct the symbolic images and reassembles unrelated parts of memory with layers of domestic objects. Contemporary artists constructed spaces and contexts to convey different messages by using social and cultural themes, where the artworks stand significantly in the global art context. This context is the environment of the artist, from which the elements of the artwork are dragged to be created. Viewers at this point would engage with their beliefs and arts, after cultural orientation between art and social values. The growing global interest in social plurality and diversity created a broad-minded audience that interacts with new cultures with understanding and tolerance.

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